A Child Educational Series

My Garden of Stories

Thought-provoking and educational Stories for children. To be read on your own as well as story-telling for the kids.

Original Urdu Compilation by…

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بسم اللہ الرحیم الرحمن

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FOREWORD

There is a famous Arabic Quote: “The best of occupations is to teach children.”

Hence, an earnest appeal is made to parents; teachers; and Guardians to become part of the upbringing of our children and moreover to consider it our duty and responsibility towards society.

Various methods may be adopted: education; practical; learning and teaching; love and respect; happiness and anger; ambition; gifts; reprimanding; inviting with Dua; etc. In short, we must have the worry and concern to teach them character and manners in whichever way possible.

All Praises are due to Allaah ﷻ, Who has given us the opportunity of also being part of this endeavour. We have found story narrating to be very beneficial in the encouragement and education of children. And, this has also prompted us to compile these storybooks.

The book in your hands is called ‘My garden of Stories’. Parents and Guardians are requested to make every effort possible in making these books easily available for our beloved children. We will be rewarded very much for this Inshaa Allaah! And do remember us in your Duas.

Muhammad Haneef Abdul Majeed (Mufti)
Preface by
Hadhrat Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias
(May Allaah Ta’ala protect him)

Foreword

All praise is due only to Allaah. We laud Him and beseech His aid and beg forgiveness only from Him and believe in Him and rely solely on Him. We seek salvation in Him from the evils of our inner selves and the vices of our actions. There is none to misguide one whom Allaah intends to guide. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship but Allaah, the One who has no partner. I also testify that Hadhrat Muhammad ρ is the faithful servant and the Last Rasul of Allaah. May Allaah Ta'ala's mercy be on him, his family and his Sahabaah τ and may He bless them and raise their status.

Allaah Jalla Majdahu reminds us of the bounties of hearing, seeing and heart for understanding in four places in the Quraan Majeed.

The relative Aayaats are: -

1.) Aayaat No. 78 in Surah Nahl (16)
"Allaah removed you from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing *(as little babies)*, and *(among the many other faculties, He)* blessed you with ears, eyes and hearts so that you may be grateful *(to Him and fulfil all His commands)*.
2.) Aayaat No. 78 in Surah Al Mu'minoon (23)
"Allaah is the One Who created your ears, eyes and hearts. Seldom is it that you show gratitude *(for these and millions of other favours that He has given you)*."
3.) Aayaat No. 9 in Surah Sajdah (32)
"He then perfected *(shaped)* him *(man's features in the womb)*, blew His spirit *(the soul which He created)* in him, and granted you ears, eyes and hearts. Little is the gratitude you show *(for all these great favours which none other can give)*.
4.) Aayaat No. 23 in Surah Mulk (67)
"Say, 'It is Allaah Who created you and gave you ears, eyes and hearts *(and every other faculty for which you cannot ever repay Him)*. *(However,)* Little is the gratitude that you show." *(Besides failing to*

express verbal gratitude, many people even fail to use the favours of Allaah in a manner that pleases Him.)

Translations taken from our “Quraan Made Easy.”

Basically Allaah Ta’aala is reminding us that He has blessed us with hearing, seeing, understanding and knowledge whilst we knew nothing at birth, so make His ibaadat in gratitude. Whilst seldom gratefulness is shown by the rejectors of Allaah’s Nabi ρ and the Quraan. Also elucidating that a child is born with all the capabilities which progress and develop gradually.

Man should express gratitude in word and deed. The faculty of hearing is mentioned before seeing for man learns more by hearing than seeing. The heart is the centre of man’s thoughts, perceptions, sentiments and knowledge. If the heart is sound the perception gleaned from the senses will also be sound. (Above from Anwaar ul Bayaan)

To simplify, man learns from the five senses, thus, hear and learn, look and learn, touch and learn, smell and learn. All this information is sent to the brain for storage via ratification, assessment and comprehension of the heart.

However, understand that one is “Malumaat” and the other “Ilm”. Many confuse both by interplacing. “Malumaat” is information like the size, shape, colour, number of decks on Hadhrat Nuh υ’s ark, but “Ilm” is the knowledge as to why Ambiyaa υ are sent, why was the ark constructed in the barren desert, where no water in abundance existed, the purpose of life, the result of acceptance or rejection of the call of the Ambiyaa υ.

Nevertheless, the child is most receptive and has active retentive facilities. It is our responsibility to provide the correct, material to be read, seen and heard, thus “My Garden of Stories.” So that one can

easily, by way of hearing, a valid Shari replacement feed the ears of our children, to develop their spirituality properly.

By reading and listening to the Stories of the pious, adequate motivation is provided to stir the character and personality of the children in an Islaamic direction.

The font size has been lessened because it is the adults who are to do the reading and no doubt may benefit more than the children.

Read, discuss, deliberate, question and revise by interactive conversation.

May Allaah Ta'ala grant us all the ability to benefit from this series.

A. H. Elias (Mufti)

PREFACE

A Pious person once asked the people sitting in his gathering: "What is the most difficult thing to do in these times?"

They all gave different replies to his question. Most of them replied: "To earn a Halaal living." Some said: "To tell the truth etc." These are the most difficult things to do in these times.

However, the pious person replied by saying: "The most difficult thing to do in these times is to correctly educate and raise our children."

It is a fact that our children are not like food, that we can put them away into the fridge so that they do not become bad. Neither are our children like gold and silver, that we can put them away into a safe to protect them from criminals.

By studying all these situations a question arises: "Then, what must we do?"

The easy reply to such a question is that we must cry to Allaah I and make Dua for our children and with that we must show them practically display a wonderful life and character. In addition, we must present to them in such a way that the good lessons have a great impact on their lives, while they are protected from bad examples.

The law of Allaah I is such that whatever is within the reach of man, then one is able to do it and whatever is not within ones reach, and then Allaah I provides for that to happen. However, these provisions are done through the dictates of our ambitions. Allaah's I help comes in accordance to the amount of effort and sincerity we have.

Hence, it was only through the Taufeeq of Allaah I, and with the guidance of my teachers that I was able to accomplish this task. This book ‘My Garden of stories’ is presented to you. May Allaah I accept it and make it beneficial.

I am also grateful to those who encouraged and guided me along, especially my teachers. May Allaah I always keep their shadow remaining with us and may we be able to always benefit from them.

I request you to point out any mistakes that I may have made and to forward me your suggestions. And also make Dua for me that may Allaah I always keep me sincere and take the work of Deen from me, and may He accept this from me. Ameen

Muhammad Sa’d (Moulana)

THE ONE-RUPEE OX

There was a man who was walking home with his ox. On the way he had to go through a jungle where there were some thieves. As he was walking with his ox, one of the thieves approached him by greeting him. The thief asked: “Are you selling this ox?”

The man thought to himself, that if he sells his ox for a good price, he will then be able to buy two oxen. So he said: “Yes, I am selling this ox.”

In the meantime, the thief’s two other brothers came along. And, they also pretended to be interested in buying the ox. All the three of them offered the man a very low price. Hence, he now refused to sell the ox. This led to an argument.

As they were arguing, an old man - who was the thieves’ father – made as if he was walking by. The man of the ox called out to the old man saying: “O! Elderly one, please help me in deciding over this argument.”

The old man – as part of their plan – stopped by and said: “I am in a hurry, so make it quick. What is the argument about?”

The man of the ox told the old man the whole story. The thieves said to the old man: “O! Elderly one, our hut is here nearby. Come along with us and make yourself comfortable. Have a smoke and then you can make the decision.”

So, all of them made themselves towards the hut, and they offered the old man a smoke. He took a few puffs and lifted his head saying: “OK, so tell me what is the price of the ox?”

All of them called out saying: “O! Elderly one, be considerate in your pricing.”

The old man started saying: “I will say a price, but remember! If you do not accept my pricing, then it would be against my honour.”

The man of the ox said: “O! Elderly one, I am pleased with whatever price you make.”

The old man coughed a few times and said: “fine, the price I make is one Rupee.”

Upon hearing this, the man of the ox almost fell off his feet. He immediately realized that he was caught in their trap. But what could he do now? The thieves quickly took out a Rupee and threw it towards the man of the ox, grabbing hold of its rope. The poor man of the ox very saddened and angered returned home. He started planning on how to get back at the thieves.

So, he came up with the following idea: He disguised himself as a woman and got himself a cradle. He sat in the cradle and hired two people to carry the cradle into the jungle where the thieves lived.

So, during the night the two hired men carried the cradle and left it at the house of the thieves.

In the morning, when the thieves woke up, they saw the cradle at their doorstep. They quickly ran to it and found a bride sitting in it crying. They asked: “Why are you crying?”

The man of the ox replied in a thin voice: “I was travelling with my newly-wedded husband going to my in-law’s home, when all of a sudden a lion attacked my husband and ate him up. The rest of the people, that was with us left me alone and ran away. Since then, I am crying and I cannot take it anymore.

The thieves consoled her and lifted the cradle along with her bringing it to their hut. Now, both of them wanted to marry the bride.

The old man said: “Sons! Do not fight amongst yourselves. Ask the lady who she wants to marry and let that person marry her.”

So the old man approached her and asked: “Young lady! Who do you wish to marry?”

The reply came from inside the cradle: “I wish to marry you.”

Upon hearing this, the old man expressed extreme joy. His two sons were dumbfounded. Later it was decided that after three days there would make Nikaah.

The old man started showering the bride to be with all of his jewelry and gifts. He wanted to impress her.

After two days the bride said: “Tomorrow will be the wedding, so send one of your son’s to the city to get a marriage officer. And, I would also need some red-powder to beautify myself. And, what arrangements have you made for the feeding?”

The old man remarked: “Oh! I almost forgot”

He sent one of his sons to the city to bring a marriage officer. Then he told the second one to arrange for some red-powder for the bride, and the third son had to organize the food. The three made their ways to the city.

The old man was now left alone with the man of the ox, the bride in disguise. The bride told the old man to go out for a little while so that she could prepare for the wedding. The old man went out.

The moment he was gone, the bride -the man of the ox- quickly took all the jewelry and money and wrapped it up in his bag. And then, he took out his disguise and came in front of the old man saying: "Old man! So my ox was worth just one rupee, Hey?"

He started hitting the old man with his stick. He hit him so badly that the old man could not get up anymore. Then he took the old man and tied him up with some rope. Thereafter, he dragged him and hung him up at the well upside down.

In the evening all the sons came back from the city. The marriage officer also came with them. They saw the whole house was upside down. They became suspicious. Their father was also not around. They could not understand what was happening. The marriage officer said: "I am thirsty. Give me something to drink."

One of the sons went down to the well to get some water and what did he see. He saw that the old man was hanging upside down at the well. He immediately called the other two brothers. Together, they helped their father get down. The old man was unconscious. They revived him. When he regained consciousness, he told them that it was not a bride. But rather, it was the man of the ox.

The man of the ox went to his house and put away all the jewelry and money. The next day, he disguised himself as a Hakeem and again came back to the jungle. When he came near the hut he heard the old man moaning and groaning. So, he knocked on the door. One of the sons came out. The man of the ox asked: "What has happened? I hear a sick person moaning and groaning "

The son replied sadly: "It is our father! Someone has hit him very badly. That is why he is crying in pain."

The man of the ox said: "I am a Hakeem; I was on my way to see to another sick person. But I heard the sound of a sick person coming

out from this hut. That is why I stopped to see if I could help. Come; let me see your father."

When he entered, his saw the old man was restless and crying in pain. The man of the ox was happy in his heart. But he pretended that he was concerned. He said: "Let me see if I can cure him."

He opened his bag and took out some medicine. Then he told one of the sons: "Get me some sour milk."

But there was no sour milk. So, the one son rushed to the village to get some sour milk. After a few minutes, the man of the ox told the other son: "There must be some turmeric powder somewhere. Bring me some, so that I may mix some medicine."

But there was no turmeric powder available. So, the second son went out to get some. Then, he told the third son: "In the village near-by, there is a certain doctor who has a fever measuring instrument. Go to him and take my name. Tell him that I need his fever measuring instrument."

So, the third son also went away.

Then, the man of the ox took some more of the old man's wealth and placed it in his bag. He came to the bed where the old man was lying awake. He lifted the old man up by his ear telling him: "So my ox was worth just one rupee, hey?"

Saying this, he started punching the old man with his fist. Then he tied him up in a box, locked in and left.

When the sons returned, they heard groaning sounds coming out from the box. They were very worried. They broke the lock and took their father out. The old man told them that it was not a Hakeem, but rather it was the man of the ox.

The sons decided that no matter what happens they will not leave their father alone anymore.

The man of the ox had now become very wealthy. The people were also surprised. The chief of the village was a very greedy person. So, one night, he came to the man of the ox and said: “Tell me the truth, where did you steal all of this wealth from? Otherwise, I will send you to jail.”

The man of the ox said: “Chief! I did not steal any of this wealth. But a generous person has given it to me. He lives in the jungle and he is very wealthy. Whenever I need some money, I go to him and he gives me. If you also want some money, then go to him and I would also send a note with you to give him telling him that I have sent you. When you go there, do not go directly to the front door, but go from behind and knock on the hut with your stick. When they ask you: “Who is there?” then you must say that you are the man of the ox. They will treat you very well.”

The chief was very happy. So, he left for the jungle at once. And, whatever the man of the ox told him to do, he did. The sons were around the old man at that time. They asked: “Who is it?”

The chief replied: “I am the man of the ox.”

As soon as they heard that, they rushed out attacking the chief and killed him. From then on, the man of the ox lived happily ever after.

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THE ROPE MADE OUT OF ASHES

It is said that a very long time ago in China, the law was that whenever anyone reached the age of 60, then he had to be taken to the top of the mountain and dropped off from the cliff.

In a certain area, there lived a Farmer who also had reached the age of 60. So, according to the law the ruler of the time had ordered that the Farmer must be taken to the top of the mountains and thrown off from the cliff.

The farmer's son did not want to throw his elderly father off the cliff. However, since it was the order of the ruler he was forced to do it. He lifted his father on his shoulders and proceeded towards the mountains.

As he was walking up with his father towards the mountains, his father started grabbing hold of the branches of the trees and breaking them. When the son saw his father doing this he asked: "O father! What are you doing? Why are you taking off the branches of the trees and throwing them down?"

The old man replied: "So that after you throw me off the cliff when you are returning you must not get lost. These trails of branches will guide you back home."

The son thought to himself: "How merciful and kind my father is to me! He loves me so much. How can I throw him off the cliff?"

So, he abstained from throwing his father off and came back home with his father quietly. He hid his father way in one of the rooms of the house so that no one comes to know about it.
After some time, the ruler came to that village and called all the farmers. He told them: “I am ordering each one of you to bring me a rope that is made out of ashes.”

The farmers were astonished about such an impossible request. They became worried that how will they ever be able to make a rope out of ashes. The poor farmers returned home disheartened.

The young Farmer, who had hidden his elderly father in one of the rooms high up in the house, came to his father and told him: “Today, the King has ordered us to bring a rope that was made out of ashes. How is it possible to make a rope from ashes?” he asked his father.

Although his father was quite old at the time, he was very intelligent and experienced. He told his son: “Take a rope and tie knots on it tightly. Thereafter, burn it slowly that it turns into ashes. Then left it up and very carefully take it to the King.”

The young Farmer was very happy to learn this from his father. He did as his father had advised him and took the rope carefully to the King. Since, the other farmers were unable to do as he had done ie bringing a rope made out of ashes. The King was very pleased and praised him for his intelligence.

The King said: “Explain to us how you did it?”

The young Farmer said respectfully: “O King! If you promise to forgive me, then I will tell you the whole truth.”

The King promised that no harm would come his way.

The young Farmer explained: “Sire! My father had reached the old age of 60. I was taking him towards the mountains to throw him off the cliff, but I could not tolerate it. So I returned home with my elderly father and hid him away. When you asked us to bring a rope made out of ashes, I found it a very difficult task to do and thought that it was impossible. So I asked my elderly father. He showed me how to do it. Hence, I was able to bring in your presence the rope made out of ashes.”

The young Farmer paused for a moment and said: “O King! I have spoken the truth.”

The King was taken aback by the explanation of the young Farmer. He thought to himself that the old people are very wise and experienced. Instead of throwing them off the cliffs they should be protected and looked after.

The King ordered: “From this day onwards, no old person must be thrown off the cliffs and their lives must be spared. The people must benefit from their wisdom and experience.”

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MY DAUGHTER IS LEARNING

It has been quite a few years now, since Ihsaanullah moved to the city from his village. However, his way of thinking still has not changed a bit. He married as soon as he came to the city. His wife Batool did not finish her schooling to the end.

The people of the city, rich and poor alike wished their children to be well educated. Batool also wished the same that her children should also be well educated. Ihsaanullah too, since marriage had the same dream.

When Ihsaanullah sold his land in the village and came to the city, he started doing some work on a small scale. Allaah I helped him to achieve success. Through the grace of Allaah I there was nothing short in his house. He became well known as 'Ihsaanullah, the contractor'.

After one year of marriage, Allaah I had granted him a beautiful daughter. But he frowned at this and was not very pleased, because he wanted a son. He did not even look at the child properly. Batool sensed this and explained to her husband. Ihsaanullah became even angrier and remarked: "What benefit is there in having a daughter? You have to feed and clothe her, and then when she grows up she marries and goes to another house!"

Batool said: "My parents too grew me up and married me to you. What is this that you are saying? This is how life is!"

Ihsaanullah mumbled: "Do not lecture me anymore. I also know that. But do you not understand that when a son grows up, he follows the father everywhere and helps in times of difficulties. A son always remains with one, whereas a daughter is totally the opposite."

"You can say what you want, but I love my Fatima very much. I will teach her and …"

Ihsaanullah interrupted his wife angrily: "Never! I will never educate her."

"But why?"

“Girls become spoilt when you educate them. What benefit is there in it? Even if we educate them, they still will be doing the household work. That is why, it is not necessary to educate them.”

Batool did not say anything as she did not want to further the argument.

Fatima was now a few months old.

After another two and a half years, Ihsaanullah’s wish became true. He was now the father of a son. Ihsaanullah was very pleased and celebrated the occasion. He named his son Adnaan.

Batool too was very happy that now her husband is not angry after becoming the father of a son.

When Fatima reached the age of three, Batool spoke to her husband. She wanted him to enroll their daughter into school. However, no matter how well she explained, Ihsaanullah was not very pleased. He said: “I will only educate my son.”

Batool had to remain quiet. The time passed on and Ihsaanullah’s beloved son had reached the age where he could start going to school. Fatima was now five years old and Adnaan was three.

Fatima was now of age where she could sense her father’s feelings. She was always sad. She also desired to go to school when she saw her little brother going to school.

One day, she went to her mother and expressed her desire to go to school: “Mother! I also wish to go to school.”

Mother explained to her lovingly: “Dear daughter! Do not bring up this topic to your father. He will become very angry.”

Fatima argued: “But our neighbour’s daughter, Najma also goes to school! Yet she is younger than me.”

Mother explained to her again, that the neighbours are different from us. We must not envy them. Adnaan goes to school because he is a boy. In our house, the girls are not educated.

Fatima was very disappointed when she heard this. Her little heart was broken. Batool too felt her pain but what could she do? She was forced due to her husband’s stubbornness. After some time, she thought of a way out for her little daughter. After all! She could read and write Urdu. She told Fatima: “Do you want to learn?”

The little girl looked at her mother delightfully and answered: “Yes mother!”

“I will teach you. But at home”

Fatima was very happy. Batool bought for her a textbook; notebook; pencil; ruler and some chalk. And then, she started teaching her at home.

Batool knew from the beginning that her husband would not be very pleased at this. That is why she taught Fatima when Ihsaanullah was not at home. However, she could not keep this away from him for a very long time.

One day, Ihsaanullah came home early in the afternoon for some work. He saw Fatima learning and broke out in fury. Batool was cooking in the kitchen. He grabbed the textbook from Fatima’s little hand and shouted: “Batool! What is happening here?”

Batool, frightened; came out from the kitchen and surprisingly looked at her husband. She said: “what is wrong? Why are you so angry?”

“Do you not remember what I told you about teaching Fatima?”

Batool replied: “But she is not going to school!”

Ihsaanullah interrupted: “It is the same thing, whether you teach her at home or at school!”

Ihsaanullah tore up the textbook. But, he did not realize that Fatima had been learning for quite a while now. She was just revising her work.

“From today onwards, if I ever see Fatima reading or writing, then there will not be anyone as bad as me.” Saying this he went out of the house.

Fatima started crying. Batool wiped off her tears lovingly. Those children, who have an interest in learning, tend to learn very fast. This was the state of Fatima. Due to the fear of her father, she continued to learn secretly by writing and reading on the chalkboard. And she would show it to her mother.

She even hid the ball pen away from her father’s sight. She kept all her things away in a box where no one could see. She was always alert and made sure that her father did not see her learning.

Adnaan was now in grade two. Since his father had spoilt him, he did not show any interest in learning. Fatima had become so intelligent that now she was also able to help Adnaan with his homework.

Batool explained to Adnaan never to let his father know about this. Fatima secretly continued to learn herself. Batool soon became the mother of another son.

It so happened; that one day in broad daylight four thieves entered their house. It was in the afternoon and Ihsaanullah was still at work.

At home were only Batool and the three children. Adnaan had just returned from school. The thieves also had a knife in their hands. Batool was holding the little child in her lap.

The thieves locked up Batool and the three children in one of the rooms. They started searching the house all over for the valuable things. The thieves had warned Batool that if she screams, then they would shoot her and her three little children. Batool was very frightened and trembling out of fear. She loved her three children more than her wealth. Adnaan clinged onto his mother. The little son, Irfaan started to cry. Batool made him quiet by telling him that the robbers will become very angry if they hear him cry.

There was only one window in that room, which had burglar proofing. They were sitting at the bottom of the window. On the left hand side was Fatima's box in which she had hidden her things. She opened it and took out a pen and paper and started to write:

"Dear Sir!

Assalaamu Alykum.

Robbers have entered our house. They have locked us up in a room. It would be very highly appreciated if you could notify the police about this. I am writing the Address of our house at the bottom of this letter.

Distressed Fatima"

She tore the page from her book and rolled it up into the lid of the pen. – She was sitting right behind mother, Batool (who was not aware of what she was doing) – Then slowly she stood up on her toes

and looked down from the window. She saw a middle-aged man walking pass. So, quickly she threw the pen down from the window in front of the man. He picked up the pen and read the note in the lid.

In the meantime, Fatima went to sit next to her mother. Batool, asked trembling: “Fatima! What are you doing? Sit quietly. Do not look down from the window.”

Fatima innocently exclaimed: “Gee mummy!”

Then Fatima whispered something in her mother’s ears, to which she was terrified. “It is a good idea! If… if we lock the room from the inside, the robbers would then…” Batool paused and quietly got up. She made a sign to Adnaan - by putting her finger on her lips – to remain quiet. Fatima brought Adnaan closer to her.

Batool tiptoed to the door of the room and she heard noises of breaking outside. The robbers were throwing about all the things in the house searching for valuables. She quickly locked the latch of the door from the inside and then returned to her place. Due to the noise that they were making by throwing everything upside down, the robbers did not even hear her, latching the door.

The police station was not very far away from Ihsaanullah’s house. The middle-aged man who had picked up the pen, in which the note was written, was a kind person. As soon as he had read the note he went to alert the police. He also knew Ihsaanullah. After he alerted the police he went to Ihsaanullah and told him about what was happening. But in the rush he did not give the full details.

In the meantime the police came and quickly surrounded Ihsaanullah’s house. The robbers came to know about them. They started shooting wildly. The robbers were unable to come out because the police were many. In the shootout, one of the robbers was killed. The other robbers thought that if they hold Batool and the three

children hostage, they will come out safely. So they went to the room where they were locked up and tried opening the door. To their amazement, the door was locked from the inside.

One of the other robbers was now also shot and injured. He called out to his other partners for help. As he ran towards them, the police had already entered the house. Ihsaanullah also appeared on the scene.

The robbers surrendered their weapons and gave themselves up to the police. After things had calmed down a little, the officer in charge asked: “Where is the brave little girl, Fatima?”

Ihsaanullah startlingly asked: “Why? How do you know her?”

The officer took out the note from his pocket and showed it to Ihsaanullah saying: “This is how.”

Ihsaanullah read the note that was written by his little daughter, Fatima. He thought that she could not read and write. He was overwhelmed when he saw that she could. Tears started falling off from his eyes.

It was not a few days since the incident that the school enrolments had begun. Ihsaanullah was proud of his daughter and took her to the school. Fatima’s face was lit up of happiness. Batool was very delighted to see father and daughter walking together.

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STUPIDITY AND NAUGHTINESS

You can either call this stupidity or naughtiness. Whatever you call it, this is the story:

The people of the house had a special type of admiration for me. Understand it such: In my childhood, I was always the first one in doing anything. Whatever I did was strange. For example, making a big noise; dad's scolding and shouting etc etc.

I also noticed that whenever I fell ill, then no stone was left unturned in showing me lots of love and kindness. However, it was a long time since I fell ill and I was missing that. I was not sick at all, but I wished to become sick again so that I could enjoy the attention. (Saying this now, I feel ashamed of myself for my stupidity back then, because I ought to ask Allaah I for good health.) Anyway, my wish was not fulfilled and I did not become sick.

I thought to myself that science has advanced so much; yet I am unable to fall sick. While thinking about this, an idea cropped up in my mind – which my father often called 'a big-head' – I thought: "let me try it out."

One morning, when the time was right, I put on my trousers and went into the bathroom. I took some toothpaste and put it on the toothbrush to brush my teeth. When my mouth was filled with the foam of the toothpaste, I came out.

Everyone was chatting in the room. I made a loud scream and dropped down onto the floor holding my chest. I cried out with my eyes rolling up and down: "My heart! My heart!" I pretended that spit was coming out for my mouth. Everyone Panicked. Mother was trying everything she could. She told everyone to do this and that.

Dad to make some milkshake for me; my small brother rushed out to call the doctor. Everyone else was rubbing me and Mother was crying

uncontrollably. In my heart I felt happy that now all the attention was on me.

I was thinking that soon the doctor will come and after checking me he will not find anything wrong with me, but to prove that he is a qualified doctor he will prescribe some medication for me and also give valuable advice to my family on how to go about treating me, that I must take a rest and have vitamins supplements etc. Then everyone at home will do as the doctor had advised, and I will be enjoying all of the attention. The people of the house will also show me their love and affection; and I will hold on to my heart pretending.

But as I was dreaming about all of this, Dad walked in. At first I was afraid but I kept my courage and continued with my naughtiness by moaning about the pain. I kept holding onto my chest. Dad came near to me and affectionately asked: "What has happened to you my beloved child?"

I mumbled in pain: "Father! I think I have a heart attack and I will not make it. (Now, I regret the lies and whenever I remember this incident I seek forgiveness from Allaah I). Upon hearing this, mother began crying even more. Father asked: "So where is the pain dear?"

I noticed a strange look on my father's face. But not withstanding that, I pointed towards my chest where my hand was kept: "Father! The pain is coming from here." And, along with that I started making sounds of feeling pain. My father's expression was now even stranger. He said: "Son! Since when has your heart moved to the right hand side of your chest?"

I thought for moment where my hand was. It was on the right hand side of my chest. And this was where I pointed to my father. That: "I am feeling the pain here on this side." I did not know how to answer, but I said still pretending to be in pain: "that… that… actually…

through the attack my heart has moved towards the right hand side of my chest."

As I was saying that, father took out his sandals – I do not know where it came from – and gave me a shot with it on my back. I turned towards mother for help, but she too took out her sandals to spank me. The rest of the people of the house also took out their sandals to spank me. I remember the scene very well.

This was my childhood stupidity come naughtiness that I have related to you. Now that I have grown up, I am no more like that; rather I am now called *'Ali the good one.'*

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THE HAUNTED HOUSE

"Eat one; eat too; or eat all three!!!"

"Ok! Got it."

"Now, Let us run away from here."

Fearfully, they started running away stamping their feet so hard; it seemed as if they were falling. What a commotion it was!!!

One of them looked in all directions scared to his lights, while the others looked towards the direction where the sound was coming from… "krrrrrrrr… krrrrrrr…"

"Here! Here!" one of them shouted trembling: "It seems as if someone has hidden away a person's bones. Run! Run! Run away from this place!!! This is a haunted house."

The three of them darted out falling on their feet.

After a little while, the crow came out from behind the curtains. Then the parrot suddenly flew out of the skylight and came next to the crow. Thereafter, the cat popped out from underneath the mosquito-net and came to sit next to the crow and the parrot. The three of them had a good laugh.

After they had finished laughing, the crow said: “Now, even forgetfully they will never come back here.”

“They will not even think about it.” exclaimed the parrot.

The cat asked: “When will our friend, the dog ever get a chance to scare them away?”

Normally, dogs would chase the cats; and cats would run after the birds; and the crows would chase away the other birds. But, in this house they were all friends of each other. They passed their time together and also protected the house.

The owner of the house was Dr Zaahid, who had two little children. The boy’s name was Usaamah and the girl was Umaamah.

Every morning, after breakfast, Dr Zaahid would leave with the two children and drop them off at school. Then he proceeded to his work at the hospital. Mother, Begum Zarina too would later leave home to do her necessary work. Sometimes she stopped to visit her friends on the way to the shops to buy the necessary items for the house.

In the afternoons, she picked up the children from school and returned home. During this time the house was left empty. She often left it unlocked.

Dr Saheb often warned her not to leave the house unattended and unlocked. “It is dangerous.” He explained. “It must not happen that some day, robbers break in and steal everything from the house.”

Zarina Begum would say: “When do I ever leave the house unattended? ‘Tiger, the dog is there to be on guard!!! And, the parrot; the bird; and the cat are always in the house. It is virtually impossible for even a strange bird to fly in with them been around.”

Dr Saheb was very much concerned: “Zarina Begum! Which world are you living in? Nowadays, we cannot even rely on the strength of humans. The thieves come with guns and hold up security guards at the banks. They rob peoples’ homes and shops etc right in front of them, humans!!! And you are relying on animals to safeguard your property!!!”

“No! That is incorrect. More reliable than humans are animals. And, our animals are one of their kind.”

But Zarina Begum’s talk was also not very wrong, The Parrot and the Crow spoke almost like humans. In fact they could make many different kinds of sounds too that were like that of humans. Sometimes their sounds were soft and on some occasions they even made scary sounds to chase away children.
The cat and the dog too were quite refined. They were not only friends to the Parrot and the Crow, but they were also very faithful to their owners. They were always prepared to give up their lives for Dr Saheb and Zarina Begum.

Dr Saheb brought up Tiger, the dog since he was very small. Even the cat grew up in that house from the time it was a little kitten. And, Zarina Begum loved him very much.

As for the Parrot, Usaamah the little son persisted on buying him. He saw it talking in broken words by its owner and immediately was

fond of it. So they bought it for him. Its original owner did not want to sell it in the first place, but Usaamah kept on nagging him. Eventually he agreed to sell it for 1000 rupees. After much difficulty and bargaining they had paid 700 rupees for it.

Although the Parrot was sort of an entertainment for the whole family, but Umaamah, the little girl wanted her own pet. So, she bought a Crow and also taught it to speak. Whatever the Crow learnt to say, Usaamah's Parrot already knew that from before. Perhaps because it picked up some words already by listening to the Parrot talk. Both the children even trained them to be intelligent like them and they taught their birds to imitate others as well.

In this way, all the four animals became friends of each other. Whenever the family was away, they played together with each other. The people of the house even gave them names. Umaamah kept her Crow's name 'Bachi Khan' and Usaamah named his Parrot 'Meena Raani'. Dr Saheb named his dog, 'Tiger' and Zarina Begum named her cat 'Aunty Pussy'.

One day, when everyone was away from home. I.e. Dr Saheb was gone to his work at the hospital; the children were at school; and Zarina Begum was gone to the shops with one of her relatives… a robber broke into the house. Tiger; Aunty Pussy, Meena Raani, and Bachi Khan looked at one another and very carefully observed. The robber was still deciding on what to steal. Perhaps he was looking for the money and the jewellery. He was searching all over the place. All four of them, together made a loud and dreadful sound: "Who are you and what do you want here?!!!"

The robber stopped in shock and fearfully looked around in all directions. "Where did this sound come from and who made it?" In his mind, he felt that there was no one in the house. "Why are you not answering?"

Then a loud and dreadful sound came. “Why are you still quiet?”

The robber even became more afraid: “No it cannot be.” It seems as if someone is here, but why can I not see anyone?” he said to himself.

“Why are you not saying anything?” they said in a thick and rough voice.

“But who are you? And where are you? Why can I not see you?” the robber exclaimed looking everywhere.

They then asked in an even frightening voice: “Do you have any Sulaimani Surmah?”

The robber was now even more afraid and he opened up his pockets expressing his stupidity: “Where do I get Sulaimani Surmah from?”

“But then again who are you people?” he asked one more time.

“hahahahaha” they all laughed in a haunting voice. “It is us… it is us… who are here and not here!!!”

Again they laughed in a haunting voice: “hahahahaha”

“Oh no!!!!” the robber held his head and nervously ran away. He did not even turn around to look back. When he was outside the house, he turned around to see what was happening holding his head and then ran away. Tiger ran quickly outside and barked him away.
After a few days, again the robber returned. But this time he came with his partner. Both of them were ransacking the house. The one robber said to the other: “This house does not seem to be haunted, because there are people living in this house?”

The other one said: “But what I told you about this house that happened to me the other day is the absolute truth. I am not making things up.”

“Nah!! It cannot be!! You must have come here to sleep and you were dreaming! I do not notice anything happening here as such.”

While they were talking to each other and searching every corner of the house, they happened to see in one corner something like a curtain. Then all of a sudden they broke out in shock. A skeleton-like thing appeared from behind making a strange sound: “Be warned!!! Be warned!!! Do not touch me, otherwise you too will become like me.” It said.

They were startled and trembling in fear. They were about to run away, and a hissing sound of a snake came out from behind the skeleton: “stupid human!!! Let go of your greed, why do you steal? Why do you eat Haraam? Work hard instead and eat Halaal sustenance.” It said.

Both of them held their ears and said: “Yes yes yes!!! We will eat Halaal sustenance. We will work hard and we will stop stealing.” Then in a pleading voice they begged: “please let us go, please let us go!!!”

Saying this, they made themselves towards the door. It felt as if someone was tapping them from behind. Then they heard a roar of a lion. They were so shaken up that they bumped into each other and fell onto the floor. They got up and charged out of the house.

After a little while, Aunty Pussy; Meena Raani; and Bachi Khan came out giggling to one another from behind the curtain. Bachi Khan said in a very serious tone: “Humans are really strange! Look at that robber. Just a few days back he ran for his life, away from here. But today he came back.”

“Greediness is a terrible evil.” Aunty Pussy said. “It makes one blind and one looses his ability to think properly.”

Man is truly enslaved by greediness. It makes him such that he cannot even consider the danger that may befall him. Even if his life is at stake, he would still go after it. The same situation was with the robbers. One experience was not enough for them. They came back for the second time. Yet, they did not learn a lesson. They came back for a third time, after one week.

They were hoping to get a lot of things out from the house. Although they were afraid of it being haunted, but they must have thought that it was just some thoughts playing in their minds. So, this time they came prepared and planned to clear up the house.

Three of them came. The third one perhaps did not believe in what the other two had told him. He must have dragged them along with him.

As they entered the house, Bachi Khan saw them from the top of the roof. It immediately came down and alerted Aunty Pussy and Meena Raani. All the three of them quickly took their positions.

The robbers went straight to the fridge and took out some water to drink. They gulped it down so fast that they almost choked. Then to make sure that no one was there, they went to inspect all the rooms.

After they were satisfied, they went into the room where the steel cupboard was standing. There was a safe in it. They started examining it and were working out on how to open it. Then all of a sudden something fell from the roof with a big bang. All the three of them turned around quickly to see what it was. It looked like it was something like the bones of a human’s hand. They lost their breath and started to tremble with fear.

"Where did this come from?" the third robber asked looking in all directions fearfully. The first robber held his hand and quietly said: "Let us run away from here. This house is haunted."

But he said: "Wait a minute!!! Let me be sure first." He asked bravely: "What kind of a ghost are you and where are you hiding? Come out from where you are!"

The other robber held himself together and said: "It is and it is not !!! because we cannot see it."

The first one said also trembling in fear: "I do not believe in ghosts. This is all nonsense."

Just as he was saying that, a fearful and trembling loud voice came out. "Eat one; eat too; or eat all three!!!"

"Eat all three!!!" it was a dreadful voice. It sounded like the hissing sound of a snake: "I am feeling hungry!!!" it said.

"Oh no!!!" not again!" the first robber said fearfully.

"Let us run away from here quickly" the second robber said.

"But what kind of a sound is this… really?" the third one asked sly fully.

"This one… this one…" the hidden voice muttered.

The second robber said shivering: "It sounds like someone is chewing bones." "Krrrrrrr… krrrrrrr… krrrrrr…"

Really! It did sound like that, as if someone was chewing bones. The third robber, at last lost his guts and started to scream: "Run!!! Run!!! This is indeed a haunted house!"

All the three of them held their hands on their head and started running. As they were running Meena Raani and Bachi Khan flew down from the inside of the ceiling. Aunty Pussy also came out from under the mosquito net chewing a plastic in its mouth. Bachi Khan said: "Aunty Pussy you are also very funny. First, you threw down some bones from the roof and then when Meena Raani said: "Eat one; eat too; or eat all three!!!" you took advantage of the opportunity by chewing on some plastic. It sounded to them as if you were chewing on some bones. Your performance was so good that it even made these brave men run away."

On the outside, Tiger had also played his part. He started barking so much that the whole neighbourhood came out to see what was happening. They surrounded the house and as the robbers were charging out, they caught them and arrested them.

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HOW VERY UNLUCKY

Shariq Mia was weak in Mathematics. In the other subjects his results were quite good, but in Mathematics he often failed and sometimes would just make it a low pass. He thought: "If only I could achieve high marks in Mathematics, then I would be able to even take a position in class."

But what could he do? Whenever the teacher explained the lesson he never paid much attention and he would fall asleep. He dreaded most

the difficult-mathematical-questions saying: “Now! Is this even worth a question?”

“If two people, for two hours daily build a structure for one week, then explain, in how many days would five people for five hours build a structure?”

“Laa Hawla walaa quwwata!!!”

“What will I get out of answering such a silly question?”

And then, he would think: “As for the subjects of algebra and geometry! Oooooooоh, I seek Allaah’s I protection! I wonder who had ever thought of inventing these.”

Yes indeed, he had heard before that algebra is derived from the Arabic word ‘AL-JABR’, which means to force something. Shariq Mia often thought: “indeed algebra does put some force on the mind’s thinking capacity. And, as for the subject of geometry, it is not even worth mentioning. It makes one look at different shapes; circles, triangles, and squares etc.”

In fact, the square shape made him think of the square slices of the mangoes that were kept in the fridge. He would leave his studying and go to the fridge to eat them.

Shariq Mia was the son of a very wealthy man. His father had a very big business. They lived in a luxury house. They had a very expensive car; servants and everything else. He was only short of intelligence. Abdul Lateef, his father was also not very well educated. That is why he wished that his son to study hard and achieve a high education. However, Mathematics was the only subject that kept Shariq Mia behind.

It so happened, that the school had a new maths teacher. The first teacher was very strict. Shariq Mia wondered how the new teacher would be. In a few days, he learnt that the new teacher was a very simple person with excellent manners and character. He does not shout at the children nor does he reprimand them. Shariq Mia thought that this was a wonderful opportunity to make the best of.

The first day, the teacher gave the class a test. All the students did well in it, besides Shariq Mia. The teacher called him and explained: "Shariq! You better work hard in Mathematics. You are a grade seven pupil, and if you do not work hard enough then you will not be able to go to the next grade."

Shariq Mia tried to flatter the teacher by saying: "Sir! Indeed, you are a very intelligent man. I notice that it is so easy for you to answer all of these difficult mathematical questions."

The teacher smiled and said: "You should also make an effort, and then you will also be able to do the same."

After a few days, Shariq told his father to invite the teacher at their home for a meal. They prepared different kinds of scrumptious dishes. For his own sake, Shariq did not waste any time in serving his teacher and making him as comfortable as possible. After they had eaten, his father said to the teacher: "You should give some extra attention to my son as he is very weak in mathematics."

The teacher smiled and replied: "Not to worry, I will see to him and make an extra effort on him."

Shariq thought to himself that things will now work out very well for him as he had planned.

The next day, the teacher called Shariq and made him sit near him. He explained to him the lesson with extra effort. Even after the period

he called him to the staff-room, and taught him a little extra. Although Shariq listened to the extra lessons, but he was not very pleased at the extra work that was given to him. He had some other intentions.

Every now and again, he brought some gifts for the teacher. Sometimes he brought a pen; sometimes a nice looking mirror; sometimes a special type of perfume; and sometimes some very special flowers.

Besides showering the teacher with all of these gifts, he also kept a very good relation with the teacher to win over his heart. He would tell the teacher: “Sir, today you are looking very good.” sometimes he praised the teacher’s clothing and sometimes he flattered the teacher’s good way of explaining the lesson, and so on. He never left any stone unturned in keeping up this good relationship with his teacher.

As the time for the final examination was drawing closer, he became confident that now he would achieve good results in mathematics. After all the gifts that he had given to the teacher and the good relationship that he had kept with his teacher. He thought that the teacher would surely now give him the high marks.

The examinations had finished and now he was waiting for his results. During that period, he often exchanged clever looks with the teacher. The teacher would just respond with a smile. And his smile was also quite strange.

The day which Shariq was so enthusiastically waiting for, finally arrived. The results were announced and to Shariq’s amazement, he was left thunderstruck when he found that he had failed in mathematics. And as per the rules, he would now have to repeat the whole year again.

Shariq was very disappointed and angry at the teacher. That why did he fail him? He sat and wondered in silence about what had happened. The pupils of the class had already left and he did not even realize that.

In the evening, the teacher came to his house to pay him a visit. Shariq sat quietly not replying to a single word the teacher was saying.

“Now speak and explain!!!” his father told him.

He did not say anything, but his eyes were filled with tears. The teacher said: “Shariq! The reason why you have failed is because you did not make an effort. To achieve high marks, Instead of working hard you tried to bribe me by giving me gifts and keeping good relations with me and telling me all the good things. You thought that you had me under your control and that I would have just passed you in your test. However, this thought of yours was false.”

“If we as teachers have to pass the students in this way, then the whole community would become ignorant. The people would have their degrees just on paper, but they would be very far of from really been educated. Do you know what a bad habit it is to bribe?”

“Instead of bribing and flattering, you should rather depend on your abilities. Achieve true success by working hard. That way you would also enjoy your achievement.”

The teacher then returned all the gifts - which Shariq had given to him and had thought that it would help him in passing - to his father.

Shariq’s father said: “Teacher!!! It was a very good thing that you had failed my son. This will teach him a very good lesson. By doing such things, failure is better than passing.”

The teacher asked: “Will you now work hard?”
“Yes sir, he stuttered.”
“Very well then! From now on, I will spend some more time with you explaining the lesson. But the condition is that you must work extra hard.”

From that day onwards, Shariq really made an effort and worked very hard. In the next examination he had achieved outstanding results.

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THE FOWL SPEAKS

THE REPORTER: Hey you! The fowl over there? Where are you hiding and going?

THE FOWL: Ha! What do you mean? Why must I hide and go around? Besides, I do not fear anyone other than Allaah I. It is you; the humans who are the ones scared of us, the chickens.

THE REPORTER: Nowadays, people have left eating chickens due to the bird-flu. You must be very pleased.

THE FOWL: Why should I be pleased? When Allaah ﷿ has in fact created us for the benefit of humankind. Eggs; Chicken Tikka; Karaahi meat; and other delicious meals are prepared from us. Tell me!!!

THE REPORTER: What you are saying is indeed true. Anyway, tell me what is this bird-flu all about?

THE FOWL: Haha! There is nothing bad in it. It is just an illness that has befallen us, the chickens. Like humans, who become ill by the

flu, bronchitis and fever etc. In the same way, we birds have also become sick. Our sickness is called the bird-flu. And also remember, that all of us chickens are not affected by this illness. It only gets to the egg-laying chickens.

THE REPORTER: Then why is it that the people are not eating chicken at all?

THE FOWL: It is merely their ignorance.

THE REPORTER: What do you have to say about chickens that are well-cooked?

THE FOWL: There is no fear at all by eating well-cooked chickens.

THE REPORTER: Then which chickens are harmful to consume?

THE FOWL: There is no fear of harm in anyone, even if one happens to eat the egg-laying chickens. The only thing is that it must be cooked very well.

THE REPORTER: And, what about the eggs?

THE FOWL: If the eggs are boiled and not half fried. And, if the omelette is prepared well, then there will be no harm in eating them.

THE REPORTER: Fine then! Now explain to me the origin of the bird-flu. When and where did it come about?

THE FOWL: Gee! Our elders say that the flu is an old-time illness. It originated for the first time in humans as a pandemic in Europe in 1918. Now, it has also taken shape of a pandemic amongst us birds.

THE REPORTER: Tell us some of the signs that we should be looking for?

THE FOWL: (expressing a sigh of relief) Sister! If any of my co-chickens are affected with the disease, then firstly, look out at the top of its head (the crown). Initially, it turns red in colour. Then slowly it becomes a bit yellowish. Thereafter, it turns black in colour. The same happens to its feet. That is the sign to look out for… beware of such chickens.

THE REPORTER: Are you not worried of the disease spreading?

THE FOWL: Ah! What is there to be worried about? This is a condition that comes from Allaahسبحانه وتعالى. We birds are patient creatures. Unlike humans, who do not exercise patience at the times of calamities.

THE REPORTER: What message do you have for the humans?

THE FOWL: Well what can I say? Cleanliness is important at all times; and to cook the meat of animals the proper Islamic way.

THE REPORTER: Thank you, dear Fowl for your valuable comments! We have learnt a lot.

THE FOWL: It is a pleasure! Sister, reporter! I am now on my way to visit one of my chicken-friends that is affected with the disease. Pray to Almighty Allah سبحانه وتعالى that He grants her cure. I have learnt this morning that she has a slight fever. In fact, I was on my way to visit her when I bumped into you.

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CLUCK… CLUCK… CLUCKETY CLUCK…

Uncle Fazloo was reading a letter with his hands trembling.

Aunty Begum asked: “What is wrong? Whose letter is this?

“Begum! You read this too. Our day has finally come.” Uncle Fazloo replied nervously.

Aunty Begum was at the primus stove. She took the letter and glanced through it. She screamed out of joy: “Aha! Wonderful. Jamaal Bhai Jaan is coming to visit us from Rawalpindi.”

“Aw Begum! He will be bringing his wife and children too. And, you are happy?” Uncle Fazloo grumbled with a frown on his face.

“Why are you becoming restless? Do you not know that visitors are the mercy of Allaahسبحانه وتعالى ? And, my brother is coming at least after ten whole years!” Aunty Begum smiled again happily.

Uncle Fazloo frowned and went away into his room. The chickens on the veranda started making a noise. Cluck… cluck… cluckety cluck…

Uncle Fazloo came outside and said: “Look Begum! I have already slaughtered two of the eighteen chickens; there is no way that I will slaughter another one again.” Begum remained silent.

The other day, one of the hens had laid some eggs and eight chickens hatched from there. Uncle Fazloo, now had a lot of chickens in his possession. In total there were eighteen of them.

Aunty Begum's brother, Jamaal Bhai Jaan wrote in the letter that they will be coming on Sunday. So, on Saturday Uncle Fazloo told Begum: "Come let us hide away our chickens at the neighbour's place."

Begum said: "Ohhawh! What is wrong if we cook some of the chickens for our visitors?"

"A lot will be wrong!!! I promise that I will not slaughter even one of my chickens." Uncle Fazloo shouted.

Begum remained quiet. She was well aware of Uncle Fazloo's stubbornness. Uncle Fazloo left the house and went out to the neighbour, Abdullah.

"Brother Abdullah! We will be having some guests at our place for a few days, and they are not fond of animals. Kindly keep my chickens by you for the few days. You have helped me out before."

He agreed, and Uncle Fazloo took all his chickens and left it by him. Then he returned home and blurted out: "Now I am at ease!!!" saying this he recited a poem:

"They will eat only Dhaal, be it mine or theirs.
O My Rabb! My chickens will be kept well."

On Sunday, at 11:00am there was a knock on the door. Uncle Fazloo and Aunty Begum went to the door. Uncle Fazloo said: "O brother… you have come… it is sad… it is strange…"

"No! It is not strange; it is your brother Jamaal." The voice came from outside.

Uncle opened the door, and all of them rushed in. the house was aloud with Salaam and Duas. Everyone hugged and embraced Uncle Fazloo and Aunty Begum. Aunty Begum went to the grocery cupboard and took out the things to make some tea.

She gave them Dhaal Masoor for lunch. And then, in the evening when they sat to eat, she presented the same again, Daal Masoor. Jamaal Bhai Jaan's children - who were boys - started making eyes to one another, hinting. Their mother looked at them sharply from the corner of her eye warning them. They ate anyhow.

At night Jamaal Bhai Jaan said: "Bhai Saab! Come let us go outside for a short walk."

"Yes, yes!! Why not!" Uncle Fazloo said. So, they went out for a walk.

As they were walking, they saw an advertising-board which read: "PURE CONDENSED-MILK KEER."

One of the sons said: "Uncle Fazloo! Get for us some Keer."

Uncle Fazloo's eyes filled with water, but he quickly: "Ehem, this Keer is affected with Cholera. Just the last week three children in our area fell very seriously ill by eating it."

As they walked a little further, they came to a shop that was selling Falooda. There were some people sitting outside and having some Falooda. Jamaal Bhai Jaan's other son said: "Uncle Fazloo! Come let us buy some Falooda."

"Ehem, son! This Falooda has a lot of bad products that have fallen into it. These people are not even conscious of cleanliness. They just sell all these harmful things to us, which makes us sick." Uncle

Fazloo made up different kinds of stories and excuses. He started walking away from there hastily, to get away from the Falooda shop.

As they walked a little further, they came to someone selling sweetmeats. Jamaal Bhai Jaan's third son said: "Uncle Fazloo! I do not think that there is any harm in eating some sweetmeats. Let us buy some."

Uncle Fazloo shouted out: "I seek Allaah's ﷻ refuge!!! Sweetmeats are unhealthy, it invites illnesses. Just yesterday, one of my friends had eaten some sweetmeats and do you know what happened to him? The poor fellow is now lying in hospital for the past two weeks now." The boys giggled.

Jamaal Bhai Jaan said: "It is okay! Bhai Saab, Let us just have some today." Saying this he took out a Rs50 note and gave it to the seller. The seller took out a few sweetmeats from his tray and placed it in a box.

Uncle Fazloo said: "On second thoughts, I think that Sweetmeats are not that bad. After all, we all are going to die someday." Saying this, he started finishing off the sweetmeats. The crumbs were falling all over his clothing.

After they had finished eating the sweetmeats, they started making themselves back homewards. Jamaal Bhai Jaan said: "Now let us buy some Falooda."

They went into the Falooda shop and placed their order. Uncle Fazloo stirred the Falooda cup with a spoon saying: "Illnesses are part of life! We should not be hard on ourselves and abstain from eating everything!!!"

After having their Falooda, they went for a little stroll to the nearby park. Thereafter, they came to the Keer shop. Jamaal Bhai Jaan said: “What do you think? Should we also just buy some Keer?”

Uncle Fazloo said: “Yes! Yes! Cholera is good. And nowadays there are medicines easily available for it too.” So, they had some Keer also.

Jamaal Bhai Jaan also bought some Keer for the rest of the family who were at home. They then returned.

The next morning, Uncle Fazloo gave the guests some tea and Paapar. Aunty Begum quietly took Uncle Fazloo in the room and said to him: “Do not be so miserly! You do have money! You should treat your guests well. In fact, even if you did not have any money, then for the sake of your guests you are even told to take a loan.”

“Enough! Enough! Do not try explaining anything to me.” Uncle Fazloo, said this and went to the shops to buy some veggies. Aunty Begum was forced to cook the veggies. The boys started making faces again, but ate it in any case.

The same veggies were brought for them at suppertime. At night, Uncle Fazloo walked in with some beans and exclaimed: “Here Begum! Take this. I have already brought the beans for tomorrow. I got the whole lot for Rs5. This is the advantage for buying veggies in the evening. I wonder why people buy their veggies so early in the morning. It is so expensive and they pay so much for it?”

Aunty Begum embarrassed, looked towards the room where Jamaal Bhai Jaan and his family were sitting. That hopefully Jamaal Bhai Jaan and his wife must not hear what Uncle Fazloo had just said. But, in fact they did. Everyone had already heard that tomorrow’s menu was to be beans.

Later, they all went to sleep. But the three boys stayed awake till late gossiping to one another. In the morning, when Uncle Fazloo woke up, he found them sitting on a sheet on the veranda. They had stuck up a piece of paper on the wall written on it in bold: "WE ARE ON A HUNGER STRIKE."

Uncle Fazloo said: "Aha!!! It is sad… it is strange…"

One of the sons stood up and said as if he was addressing a crowd: "Beloved brothers!!! Since we came to this house, we have only eaten Dhaal and more Dhaal. Beans are in huge numbers here, there is no short of them. And soon there will be an establishment of Branjils here. We hereby protest!!! For Allah's sake, show mercy on us. After giving us all of these, we demand that you give us some chicken and mutton."

The other son got up and chanted:
"From Dhaal!!! Save us!!!"

The others all called out in chorus:
"From Beans!!! Save us!!! From Branjils!!!"

Their father, Jamaal Bhai Jaan and his wife; and Aunty Begum were looking out through the window at the protest outside, on the veranda.

Uncle Fazloo got scared and asked: "Children!!! Until when will you be on your hunger-strike?"

The first son replied: "Our hunger-strike remains until we get hungry."

Whilst the hunger-strike was going on, the neighbour Abdullah and his wife broke out in an argument: "Why have you taken this burdensome load of keeping Uncle Fazloo's chickens? These

chickens have messed up our whole yard!!! And, we have to also feed them. I demand that you return them at once, otherwise I will slaughter them one by one all by myself."

Abdullah – afraid – quickly lifted up the pigeon-net, where all the chickens were kept and climbed onto the roof. The neighbours' roof was attached to Uncle Fazloo's roof. He stood up and peeking from the top shouted out angrily: "Take! Here, take!!! Fazloo. This is the limits. Here!!! Hold onto your eighteen chickens; we cannot go on like this, taking care of them."

Saying this, he lifted up the net and the chickens ran out into Uncle Fazloo's yard. Cluckety cluck… cluckety cluck… cluck, cluck… All their feathers were flying around everywhere. They were making such a big noise that no one could here anything that anyone was saying.

The chickens came out onto the veranda, where the sons were protesting. They were awe-struck for a moment. Then they grabbed hold of two chickens at a time saying: "The chickens are eighteen, and we are nine."

Uncle Fazloo could not understand at what was going on. His face was changing in all different colours.

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THE TREE SPEAKS

Passing by the high and tall trees; the little green flowers and thorny plants; and kicking through the dry leaves and small thorny bushes, the three children were racing with one another. As they were running, a big branch of a tree fell in front of them.

This time they were going through another route, which they were totally unfamiliar with. Hasan and Haroon jumped over it, but little Aali fell as he tried to jump over it.

Hasan and Haroon stopped in their tracks and turned around to help Aali up. But he was sitting on the branch and rubbing his feet.

“What happened, Aali?” Hasan came near and asked.

“Nothing! A thorn is stuck in my foot. Go on, the two of you, as it is I am tired. I will catch up with you slowly.” Aali replied.

Hasan and Haroon, afraid that the game must not begin, started running off quickly.

Aali sat and rubbed his foot. After a little while he thought: “If the pain does not become less, then I will have to go home while the other children will be having fun at the river-bank. And, when mother finds out, then she will not allow me to leave the house. I do not want to stay at home while the other children are enjoying themselves.” Perturbed, he hit his fist hard on the branch he was sitting on.

“It is not a good thing what you have just done.” A voice suddenly said. Aali, looked around in surprise to see where the voice was coming from, but there was no one there. Afraid, he got up and started running. He heard the voice again.

“Do not be afraid! I am here to help you.” Aali sensed that the strange voice was coming from the branch on which he was sitting.

“Sit!” the voice ordered. Filled with fear, he came closer and said: “I am quite sure that you will not find it to be a problem by me sitting on you.”

It made an echoing laugh. “Kee, kee, kee… where do I have any life to feel pain? I can only see, listen and talk.”

“Then what were you saying to me earlier on?” Aali asked.

“You sound ungrateful when you complain about the little pain that you are experiencing. As it is you do play and enjoy yourself everyday. However, just for one day when you have a small thorn in your foot, then you forget of all the previous pleasures that Allaah سبحانه وتعالى had allowed you to enjoy, and now you complain. In fact, I too had committed such a mistake before, the punishment of which I am experiencing until now.” A sudden fear clouded the voice.

“What mistake did you make?” Aali asked.

“Just like you, I too had forgotten about my pleasures and complained of the little difficulties that came my way. Hence, I had to face the consequences of my ingratitude. For this reason I stopped you. “The tree answered.

“But, what actually happened to you? Narrate to me the whole story!” Aali asked enthusiastically.

The branch sighed and said: “You see the river over there, where the village is! And, where all you little children go to play! I was also there once upon a time. From amongst all the other trees and plants that were around me, I was the tallest and the biggest of them all. All the other trees and shrubs were envious of me and desirous to be like me.”

“What a wonderful life I had! I enjoyed the cool breeze and the fresh air. I talked to the fast-flowing river and expressed joy when the children came to play. All the trees and shrubs respected me. The travellers and villagers alike often came by and rested under my shade.”

“The children rocked and rolled on my branches. They played hide and seek. They climbed on top of me and hid away. And, the little innocent children ran about beneath me.”

“Understand it as such: I was surrounded by happiness upon happiness from all sides. Every blessing was at my disposal and I was living the best of lives. However, I slacked in just one thing. I was ungrateful and complained about little things.”

“When the children came and hung themselves swinging on my branches, then sometimes the bark of my tree would chip off a little. The discomfort I felt was minor, but it made me very angry.”

“I often made their swing fall off me onto the ground, and sometimes I made them fall off from my branches. These little blunders did not really affect me largely. But, I had become so ungrateful and proudful that I moaned and groaned about little things.”

“In the early days, whenever I saw the joy and happiness on the little childrens’ faces, it made me proud that I was the cause of their happiness and joy. I felt and experienced the same. And, I often forgot about complaining. But, later my habit of complaining had increased so much that I started moaning and groaning upon every little trouble. Eventually, I went a step further and expressed my unhappiness to the river and the winds.”

“It so happened that one day, it rained. The people of the village celebrated and everyone came out to play in the rain. Some placed their mats under my shade; while the children hung their swings on the tree branches and ran all over the place. They hid away behind me and climbed up on the top of my branches. I saw everyone’s faces lit up with happiness. They were enjoying themselves.”

“I was the only irritated one. I felt like running away from there, but I could not. Hence, I remained standing there annoyed.”

“In the midst of all of this, the rain kept coming down without stopping. Soon the river-level began to rise higher and higher until it started to overflow onto the banks of the river. The river was very worried. It said: “if the rain continues to come down like this, then I would have to overflow into the jungle. Otherwise, the village would be flooded.”

“When the water-level rose higher and the river could not bear it any longer, the river said: “now I will have to overflow into the jungle.”

“The people of the village had already left for secure ground. I thought that this was the ideal opportunity for me to at last leave this place and go far away from the people, with the help of the river, of course. I asked the river to pour its water over my roots and wash me away into the jungle.”

“The river was very worried and said: “do not say such silly things. Why do you want to leave all your friends?”

“But, I insisted and the river was forced to abide to my request. So, it poured its water over my roots and in a few minutes the ground became soft. I uprooted myself and fell onto the ground, booooom!!! It was the worst feeling of my life. I now learnt what it felt to be like on the ground. I could no more swing myself against the winds. It was now too late for me to turn back on my decision. I was now a weak tree and was washed away with the force of the water. Finally, the water left me here.”

“For a few days I enjoyed the silence, but then I realized that my enjoyments and pleasures were suddenly snatched away from me. I did not have any friends anymore. My branches and leaves started drying up and I was left here all alone to myself, lifeless.”

"I now remember the good old days of enjoyments and pleasures. I often think about how I could have ever chosen to be in this condition by complaining about the little problems I faced. Now I am serving my punishment for being ungrateful." Saying this, the tree kept quiet.

Aali's eyes were filled with tears. Man often ruins his life by complaining over little problems and by forgetting the blessings of Allaah ﷻ.

Aali was about to say something to the tree when suddenly Hasan and Haroon came running. "What has happened Aali? You are still sitting here!" Hasan asked in amazement.

"Actually, I was talking to this tree…" Aali was about to tell them, but Haroon interrupted: "Yes indeed, you were talking to this tree." He started laughing out aloud. Hasan also laughed. Aali looked towards the tree, but it was silent.

"What! Was I just day-dreaming, or did I fall asleep?" Aali asked himself. But he did not have an answer. The tree too was quiet.

Anyway, whether it was a dream or a reality, Aali was pleased to learn a very important lesson in life.

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THE STORY OF THE WILD BIRD

Friends! This is a story of a wild bird that was flying around a pigeons' nest and waiting in the trees for the right chance to attack

the pigeons and eat them up. However, the pigeons were very clever and fast for it. Whenever it tried to attack anyone of them, one of them would fly out and save the others from it. The wild bird got very upset and started thinking of a way to attack the pigeons.

It thought that since the pigeons were very clever and fast for it, it needs to come up with a clever idea to easily grab hold of them. It thought and thought for quite a few days and then finally came up with an idea.

So, it went to the pigeons and sat by there nest for a while. Then it said kindly: "Brothers and sisters! I am also a bird like you possessing two legs and two wings. I can also fly like you. The only difference is that I am bigger and stronger than you and I can hunt down other birds, but you cannot.

I have the strength to attack and hurt a cat with my claws, whereas you cannot. You are always at risk and constantly under attack. I wish to protect you so that you can always live in happiness and peace. Freedom is your birth-right and it is my duty to protect your freedom.

I am always concerned about your protection, because every time you are afraid to fly out in the open. In the same breath I am worried of the fact that you are scared of me.

Brothers and sisters! I am one who is against oppression. I believe in justice and peace and I wish to establish a just system of governance; so that the enemy must turn its attention away from us; and we must enjoy all sorts of freedoms and live in happiness and peace. I hope that we can get together and live in peace and harmony amongst ourselves. We must unite and attack our enemy together.

However, this is only possible if you accept me as your king. If you do this and give me all the power to govern over you, then it would

become my ultimate responsibility to protect you. Right now you cannot understand the reality of the freedom and peace that I am telling you about. I assure you that you will live a totally good and new life after this."

Thus the wild bird came everyday to the pigeons and repeated these words to them. Soon the pigeons began to believe in what it was saying to them.

Then one day, the pigeons held a meeting amongst themselves to discuss what the wild bird was promising them. They decided to make it their king. After two days, it presented an eloquent speech to them from its throne, making excellent promises and swearing on different oaths to bring peace, security, freedom and justice to them.

In return, the pigeons too swore on oaths to be faithful to it. They gave their total allegiance and support to the wild bird.

Friends! Thereafter this is what happened… for the next few days, the wild bird came everyday and protected the pigeons from all types of harm. One day, a cat even came by, trying its luck to catch one of the pigeons. The wild bird along with its other family-wild-birds gave it such a hard blow that it ran away from there fearing its life. The wild bird continued in this way, protecting and saying kind words to the pigeons. Until eventually they began trusting it with all their life.

The pigeons even started coming right next to it without any fear. They were very pleased and happy about the freedom and security they were enjoying.

Then one morning, when they were having their feed, the wild bird came over to them. It was looking frail and weak, as if it was sick. It sat there quietly for a little while, and then in a voice of a king it announced: "Brothers and sisters! I am your king and you have made me your king by your choice. I am protecting you from all types of

harms. Thus you are living in peace and harmony. You know, that I also have needs. Hence, I proclaim by my royal decree that whenever I wish to, I shall take anyone of you and satisfy my hunger by eating you up.
I ask you! That until when must I remain alive without eating anything? Until when will I have the strength to protect you, if I do not eat?

In addition, I must add that it is not just my right alone to catch anyone of you and satisfy my hunger by eating you, but it is also the right of my royal family to do so. After all, they also play a part in protecting you from all types of harm. Had it not been for me and my family, then what would you have done when the cat tried to catch you the other day? Just imagine, how many of you would have being killed and hurt by the cat."

Saying this, the wild bird came to the pigeons and grabbed a fat one in its claws taking it away. The other pigeons looked at one another in astonishment.

The wild bird and its family started doing this daily at their convenience.

The pigeons were now living in utter fear and worry. Their freedom was suddenly taken away. They were now living in more fear than before. They started saying: "This is the punishment for our stupidity. Why did we even in the first place, allow him to be our king? Now, what must we do?"

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WORK AND WAGES

There was an employer who had many labourers working for him in his factory. Although he had a lot of money, he was very miserly. He accounted for each cent of his and when the time came to pay his workers, it felt as if his life was coming out.

One day, one of his workers, while taking his salary said: “Sir! Things are getting very expensive nowadays. Increase our salaries a little.”

The miserly employer replied abruptly: “Thank Allaah سبحانه وتعالى! That at least you are getting something. Otherwise, you would not be even having any work to do.”

The worker amazed, asked: “Sir! And how is that?”

The miserly employer said: “Look, there are 365 days in a year. From those 365 days you sleep for eight hours everyday, which equals to 122 days. i.e. 122 days are just gone in sleeping. You are now left with only 243 days.

Then, everyday for eight hours you pass your time here at work messing around; joking and telling tales. This leaves you with only 121 days.

Daily, you take a one hour break from the factory to eat lunch. This works out to a total of 15 days a year. Now you are left with only 106 days.

On Friday, you only work for half a day, which equals to 26 days per year. 80 days are left.

You take Sundays off, which equals to 52 days a year. 28 days are left.

Then, once a year, you take 10 days leave, which leaves you with 18 days. From the 18 days, you celebrate Eid twice; and you take some other days off.

So, in this way your whole year passes by doing nothing constructively.

Yet, you are asking for an increase. You should be ashamed of yourself."

Listening to this, the worker was left dumbfounded and disheartened.

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THE FIRST STEP

As they walked into Shawbee's room, their eyes opened up wide in shock. Actually there was nothing to be really shocked about, for on his head neither was there anything that looked like an animal's horn nor was there a tail. But, be that as it may, everyone was surprised.

Grandmother's mouth was opened up wide in shock and her face was turning red in anger.

Had it not been for Bajee Saffoo and mother holding onto one another, they would have fallen down unconscious. Waqarbhai was holding onto Wikibhayya's hands tightly.

Shawbee was the one ultimately responsible for the whole commotion. Afraid, he looked at everyone and gazed at his feet. His shoes were filled with mud; his shirt and trouser were so muddy that they could not recognize its original colour; and his head was covered with so much of mud that they could not understand how it was

possible for a little head like his to be able to carry the heavy weight of the mud.

“Shawbee, My child! What has happened to you?” grandmother broke the silence in the room and asked.

“Yaa Allaah! What has happened to my child?” Mother cried out.

“Mother! It seems as if Shawbee has bad friends.” Wikibhayya implied.

Father blurted out in rage: “Shawbee!!! Quickly, go and sort yourself out and then after Esha meet us here in the study.” Saying this, Father left the house. Shawbee was so nervous that his heart started pumping faster.

Limping on his feet he went towards his room. He over-heard Bajee Saffoo commenting: “Ammaa Bibi! Shawbee has been messed up like this for a week now, but today he has gone beyond the limits.”

“Yes, bhai! Our Shawbee was always very conscious of his cleanliness and he loved to be tidy. I wonder what has happened to him all of a sudden.” Mother was concerned.

“What do you think is his problem?” “He must have joined the wrong company of untidy friends.” Wikibhayya commented again.

“But, Wikibhayya! Shawbee did not meet up with any of his friends for the whole of last week.”

He goes to school in the morning and when he returns he goes to Maulvi Saheb and reads his Quran. Thereafter, I wonder where he goes to. Because, when he returns in the evening his clothing is all messed up with mud and he seems to be dozy.

“The tuition teacher had also remarked that Shawbee must go and have a check up by a doctor, because he seems to be looking ill.” Bajee Saffoo said shrewdly.

While they were passing their comments in the room, Shawbee went to have a shower and cleaned up himself. Then he went up to his room and started thinking. He became edgy at the thought of Father’s striking teeth. And then he started to cry. Bajee Saffoo saw him and fell pity on him.

Although grandmother had barred him from the kitchen, but for how long could she tolerate seeing her little grandchild crying? She quietly went into the kitchen and brought out a plate of Sojee and sweetmeats, along with some warm milk in a glass for him. She came in to his room and softly called out: “Shawbee!”

He got up with a jerk wiping his tears. His appetite grew when he saw the sweetmeats and the Sojee. After drinking the warm milk he felt much at ease.

“Bajee Saffoo! You are such a nice person!” Shawbee exclaimed kindly. Bajee Saffoo nodded his head feeling good about himself. In the same breath he commented: “look at what Shawbee is getting up to nowadays.”

After Esha Salaah they went out to relax on the veranda. Grandmother sat under the tree while father’s seat was still empty. Wikibhayya sat near grandmother. Bajee Saffoo picked on some of the roses in the garden. And, mother sat calmly after finishing the house work.

As they sat father walked in and seated himself on his chair. The veranda was lit up with the moonlight. It was an atmosphere of happiness. Father looked around and asked: “Where is Shawbee?”

"Father! Shawbee is waiting for you in the study."

"Call him here! I need to still reprimand him in front of everyone."

Wikibhayya went in to call Shawbee. Father told him to have a seat. He went to cuddle up next to mother. Father shouted out: "Shawbee!!! Sit properly; this is not the time to cuddle up." Shawbee got up and went to sit on the one corner of the bench.

"Ok! So Shawbee! Now, tell us what you are getting up to these days?" Father asked.

Wikibhayya whispered: "He is suspicious."

Mother showed him sharp eyes. He placed his finger on his lips and sat quietly.

"Father! He…" Shawbee stuttered.

"Shawbee! Tell us the whole truth. You know very well that I do not tolerate lies, and telling lies is the root of all evils."

Shawbee said obediently: "Father! I too hate telling lies. And I know very well that the telling of lies was prohibited by Nabi ﷺ. Therefore, I will not tell a lie."

In actual fact, to tell you the truth… there is a new boy in our class, Maajid. Maajid is a very good boy; and very intelligent. I made good friends with him and since he is a boy of excellent character and hardworking, the teachers too are very fond of him. In a very short time, he won over the hearts of all. However, for the past few days he was absent from school.

Our teacher, Hameed asked about him, so all our classmates went with him to visit Maajid.

Maajid comes from a very poor household and lives in a poor area. His father and brother are working hard to pay for his studies.

When we went to his village, then we were dismayed by seeing the poor conditions there. All the houses are made of mud and there is dirty water flowing all over on the streets. Every home is in abject poverty.

Father! The environment of the village is very unhealthy. The clotheless children play around in the dump. We were even more dismayed when we found that Maajid's house was the same as the outside. Dirty. There were flies all over and the food stuff was left open. Maajid had a severe fever and he was sweating all over. His mother, father and brother were very worried about him. So, our teacher, Hameed asked us: "children! Do you know what causes diseases to spread?"

"Pollution." Faysal lifted his hands up and replied. Our teacher remarked: "yes, that is correct. Pollution. Do you know that if we keep the environment clean, then diseases will not spread?"

"Yes, Sir!" everyone replied.

"Then what are you waiting for? Come on; let us all together speak out against pollution. Let us keep our country's every town and city clean. If we clean up just one village, then that would be the first step in the right direction. If every school keeps its environment clean, then the entire country would become clean.

So, we all got together and started cleaning up the village. And, Father! The whole of last week we went to Maajid's village and helped in cleaning it up. We went to every home and campaigned about cleanliness. We also placed dirt bins in the front of each home.

We raised funds to stop the leaking sewerages and storm water drains. And, we fixed up all the roads.

We telephoned the council to take away all the garbage that was all over. Now, Maajid's village is cleaned up. Through a little effort on our part, we created awareness amongst the villagers. Hameed Saheb told us that if we all fulfill our duty, then our environment would become clean from pollution.

As Shawbee was saying all of this, the people of the house were stunned. Little Shawbee has become such a caring and clean hearted child. Father got up from his place and hugged him.

"My Shawbee! My Maajid! My dear son! Indeed, you have done something very great. I am surely going to meet your teacher, Hameed; and give him my well-wishes. And as from today, I too will take part in this effort."

"Honestly? Father!" Shawbee asked.

"Yes my Son! Honestly."

"And me too Shawbee!" Bajee Saffoo lifted his hands up and called out.

"And, my son! I am also willing." Mother and grandmother said together. Wikibhayya in an instant got up from his chair: "Where are you going?" Father asked.

"Father! I too will make an effort in creating awareness for a cleaner environment."

"From now on?" Bajee Saffoo and Shawbee asked.

“Yes, from now on.” Everyone smiled at Wikibhayya’s statement. And, mother grabbed Shawbee and cuddled him up in her lap.

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A STORY OF SIMPLICITY

IN GRANDMOTHER’S WORDS

Grandmother was quite tired after her long journey by aeroplane from Karachi to Montreal. At her elderly age she had travelled for approximately twenty-two hours without stopping. Yes, on the way she did make a stop in Paris to change flights. During her journey the weather had also changed quite a bit, because when she left Karachi it was boiling hot compared to Paris and Montreal. Upon arrival, she did not want to eat anything. All she wanted was a hot shower so that she could have a nice sleep.

I was very much amazed to find that all she drank was a warm cup of milk, and then she covered herself with a blanket and went off to sleep without even taking a sleeping tablet.

The next morning, she was as fit as a fiddle. Whilst we were having breakfast I told her how amazed I was to find that she had slept without even taking a sleeping tablet. She laughed saying: “Why should I have a sleeping tablet when a hot shower and warm milk is enough to put me off to sleep?”

After finishing off with breakfast, she asked for her suitcase, from which she took out a small parcel. Then she said: “The butter that your mother had put on the toast was more than the required amount. I feel a bit uncomfortable in my stomach now. But it is fine; I know how to sort it out.”

She took out some greenish seeds from her parcel and made it fine with a teaspoon. Then she started chewing on it. It had a wonderful aroma. She told me that it was *Sauf,* which helps in digestion. She gave me some too. I was nervous at first, but when I tried them out I found that they were really helpful.

Grandmother's lifestyle was totally different from ours. She was always comfortable and at ease. Her face had a special type of glow which showed out her peacefulness. She ate in moderation, foods such as meat, cheese, butter and other items.

More than meat, she loved her vegetables. She ate very little of the sweet things. When I asked her, she told me that we should not eat a lot of meat. Eating sweet things all day is also unhealthy. Yes, fruits are good.

After breakfast, she asked us to give her some work. So, she prepared delicious vegetables for lunch and then did some other chores around the house for about two whole hours. Thereafter, she went to lie down on her bed with her Tasbeeh and while making Thikr she fell off to have a nap.

I observed her actions for the whole day and I found that she did all the work without even for a moment looking at the time. For the evening she fried some delicious pastry, but she had very little of it.

The next day I was free from work, so I asked her to tell me some tales about the early days. She said: "Yes! Those days were very much different from these days. We slept very comfortably without taking any sleeping pills. Until now I do not need sleeping-pills to put me off to sleep."

She said: "In those days we also fell ill, but we fought our illnesses with positive attitudes. The doctors were also experts in their fields. They made medication from herbs. But, instead of giving us

medicines they emphasised more on a healthy diet. The sick were very well taken care of, and proper food was given to them."

Grandmother continued: "The roads were gravel, on which horses and carts travelled. And, travelling in those days was very difficult and tiresome. Due to your grandfather's business, I was fortunate to stay in both, the built-up areas and the villages."

I listened attentively as grandmother told me her tales. She said: "We had no alarm clocks then, but the Fajr Athan was an indication to us for the end of another peaceful and long night. Then the birds would start chirping and making loud noises. The cocks and roosters crowed at the break of dawn. Now, we knew that it was the time to get up and wash to go to the Masjid for Salaah."

When the men returned from the Masjid they read Quran. The sound of the recitation of the Quran was heard from every home. Until today, I am in a habit of reading Quran after Fajr.

After reciting the Quran and performing Salaah the women busied themselves in preparing the breakfast. The families were all like one. Everyone did the work together. It was not a custom to drink too much of tea. We just drank a warm cup of milk in the morning. The old people dipped some bread in it and had that for breakfast.

As for the young ones, they considered it their duty to serve the elders. When I had just got married, my mother-in-law; her step-mother and her husband's other three widowed aunts; all of them lived in the same house. I considered it my duty to take care of them. Whenever they got ill, then I myself made their medication for them and prepared special food for them. We also had workers that I had to supervise.

In my time already, modern doctors had started making themselves known. Females visited 'lady doctors' only. Every home had its own

doctor. And that doctor was well aware of each individual's health-problems. It was enough for him to be able to diagnose you by just telling him about your problem verbally. Sometimes the Hakeem visited the homes and checked on the sick person.

At night, if we could not fall off to sleep, then we mixed some wild herbs in tea and drank it. That helped us sleep very well. Coughs and colds were treated with a mixture of pepper, herbal leaves boiled in water and mixed with black spices. As we drank we could feel an immediate difference in our body temperatures."

I then asked Grandmother about her shining white teeth. She first laughed and then said: "My teeth are strong and white because I did not eat Paan and Tobacco. The women of the house considered the eating of Paan awful. As for those who ate it, they made it a point to clean up their teeth afterwards.

Life was very simple. We did not have toothbrushes and paste, but what we used generally were twigs that came from a special tree. We made these soft and mixed Margosa with some salt and black peppers for toothpaste. We kept it in a small container and used from it every morning. It was like a family affair.

At night before we went off to sleep, we ensured the use of Surmah. Some homes used Kaajal while others used Margosa oil. These kept the eyes strong and healthy. In fact the old people had such strong eyesight that they could very easily put the cotton in the eye of the needle without the help of spectacles.

The elderly ladies of the house had a special kind of box wherein they kept their Paan. It was called a 'paan daan'. The Paan Daan was used as a first aid kit as well, because it had in it useful spices such as: digestive herbs; Sawf; ajwaain; Ilaachi and Lawng etc. These ingredients are very helpful in case of emergencies.

The elderly ladies always considered healthy living and cleanliness for their children. In winter, they massaged their children's heads with oil and even made it a duty for the domestic workers to do so. They poured warm oil in their children's ears; paired their nails regularly and bathed their children properly. Yes, in those days too there were some mothers who did not take care of their children. We called them as *'irresponsible mothers'*."

Grandmother was still telling me all of this and the time of Maghrib Salaah set in. She said: "Son! This, what I have just told you was a little taste of the simple lifestyle we lived in the early days, which today's generation of people call the dark-ages. But, in reality they do not understand. It was these very same principles of the early eastern civilisations that have led the way to modern civilisations.

Today, the people of the so-called new world are studying the early civilisations. Time has advanced very much. However, the healthy and simple lifestyle that was full of peace and tranquillity, which we had in the early days, is also possible and beneficial for those living in these modern times.

Come! Get up with me now and let us perform our Maghrib Salaah together. See what kind of peace of mind you will enjoy."

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THE MEMORANDUM

About four years ago, the political situation in our country was such that everyone - big and small – felt that they must demand their rights from the government.

It was the first time in my life that I saw people taking part in protests and rallies. I thought to myself that it was only people like me who were sitting quietly and not protesting.

Roofi took out his shoes and threw them to the one side of the classroom and he threw his bag onto the other side. Then imitating some leader he shouted out: "We also have rights!!! We also have the right to live!!!"

"Yeah! Yeah!" Everyone responded.

Roofi then said: "This is the only country in the world that does not grant its children their own rights."

Iqbal got up from his place and said: "When the big-peoples' rights are granted to them, then why should we, the small ones not demand for our rights too?"

Mota laughed and said in a poetical form:
"We also have tongues in our mouths (and long ones too).
Only to ask, what you are seeking?"

The others gave him a long round of applause.

Thereafter Roofi shouted out like some revolutionary leader: "O Children of the world!!! If you want to live, then you must unite!!!"

Mota tore out a page from one of his notebooks. All of us were sitting on our places on the floor exchanging ideas.
Iqbal said: "Let the title be… *'THE DEMANDS OF THE OPPRESSED CHILDREN OF THE WORLD'*

"Until now, we have tolerated all kinds of patience and oppression. But, now our patience is running out. For this reason we are now

forced to highlight our demands. On behalf of all the children we demand the following:

1. We demand that we have two Sundays in a week, because Sunday, the seventh day of the week comes and goes by very quickly.
2. We demand ten or fifteen days of holidays each month.
3. We demand four months instead of two months of holidays in the summer seasons; and two months in the winter seasons.
4. We demand that difficult subjects, such as English and mathematics must be removed from the curriculum. This must be replaced with interesting story-telling books.
5. We demand that a new method of teaching history and geography be adopted, because we find the present method to be very boring. Instead of teaching us a history lesson from the textbook, we demand that the teacher show us a history video. And, as for geography… if the lesson is about a certain place, then we demand that each time the school must take us on an excursion to that place.
6. We demand that difficult words such as 'latitude' and 'longitude' must not to be taught to us.
7. We demand that the stick must be removed from every school. Besides, we demand that no punishment must be meted out to us, such as: 'catching of the ears'; 'sitting in golden chair'; and 'picking up papers' etc.
8. We demand that whichever principle is found guilty of not abiding by these clauses, he must be sent to serve in the army and placed in the front rows of battles.
9. We demand that children must not be given any homework. And, if any child does his work on his own, then he must be rewarded with gifts of sweets and chocolates.
10. We demand that we, the children, must be given an extra allowance on top of that which we are getting at present.
11. We demand that the tuck-shop must give us free ice creams and chocolates every day.

12. We demand that the elders must treat us with mercy and kindness. They must not carry-on like police officers checking on us all the time.

In this way, we prepared our list of demands. When it was ready and drafted out, then Mota read it out aloud to everyone. He then asked: “People! Now what must we do with the list? Who must we give it to?”

Iqbal responded: “Let us hand it over directly to the minister himself, because on many occasions we have handed over such demands to the principle, but he had never responded favourably. It was on deaf ears.”

Roofi said: “I wish that our memorandum could someway get published in the newspapers.”

Mota suddenly remembered: “I know of some editor. He is on leave at the moment, but he will be returning in one or two days. Let me talk to him, perhaps he will publish our memorandum.”

“Where does he stay?” I asked.

Mota replied: “Near the park on the corner by the fountain, house number 101.”

As soon as the school came out, we rushed to the editor’s place. As we came near we peeked from the nearby bushes. A tall man came out - Mota told me that the tall man was the editor - He quickly put his bag in the car and then went back into the house. We realized that he was in a hurry to go out somewhere. Iqbal shook his head disappointedly saying: “It will be useless if we speak to him now, because in the first place he will not want to listen to us, and if he does then he will not pay much attention to us. Perhaps he will even dilly dally in the matter.”

We were very concerned imagining what would be happening soon. I whispered: “I have an idea!”

The rest turned towards me anxiously saying: “Tell us quickly!”

I said: “I think we should quietly place our memorandum in the editor’s bag. Then when he opens up his bag he will see our memorandum in the mix. Perhaps he will be kind enough to publish it.”

Mota asked: “So who volunteers to place the memorandum in the editor’s bag?”

“You!” The three of us called out in one voice.

Mota remarked: “Me! You mean Me?”

“Yes! You! And no one else!” Roofi nodded.

Mota grumbled: “What! Am I the only person you can think about?”

Roofi said: “Yes, and what do you find wrong in that?”

“What if someone sees me and suspects me to be a thief? And you know very well that it is a very bad thing to get into someone’s car just like that. You boys will not do it hey?” Mota exclaimed in a worried tone.

“Count me out.” Iqbal quickly said.

Roofi said: “You cannot even fulfil such a small task. If you refuse, then we will drag you into the car. Do you understand! ”

Before Mota could even say anything more we dragged him into the car. Then we told him what to do from behind the bushes. Roofi said: "That file over there!!! It looks like an important file. Put the memorandum into it, quickly!"

The briefcase was not locked. So, Mota was about to open it when the house door suddenly opened. The Editor Saheb walked fast towards his car. He got in and started the car: Vroom!!! Vroom!!! Then he drove off fast with Mota who was still at the back.

We were so scared that the hair on our skin was standing and our hearts were beating fast. We wanted to scream out loudly and cry.

Roofi bravely made Dua: "O Allaah! We are innocent little children. Please have mercy on us and let Mota return safely. Ameen!" We all said in one voice.

Now, we were at least at some ease. We were sure that Mota will come up with a plan to get out of the trouble.

Anyway, we went away from there and headed back home. We sat in the lounge very worried and thinking of what had happened. Neither did we eat nor did our hearts feel like doing anything. We just sat there quietly.

After about two or three hours Mota walked in. we were happy to see him and got up to hug him. Roofi asked: "Mota! So tell us what had happened?"

Mota, first made us hear about how bad we were by dragging him into the car and getting him into so much of trouble. He poured out his heart's feelings and then said:

"When the Editor Saheb got into the car, I quickly hid away under the seat covers. My heart was beating fast. I feared that if he finds out

about me being at the back of his car, he will stop the car and give me a good spanking. Then he will take me to the police.
However, after a little while I settled down a bit and a strange kind of courage overpowered me. I quietly opened up the Editor's briefcase and took out some of his envelopes and documents and put them into my bag. Then I placed our memorandum into it.

As I was closing the briefcase I felt that the car was suddenly stopping. I peeked out from under the seat covers and found that we were by some hotel. The Editor got out from the car and went into the hotel. I quickly jumped out of the car and tiptoed away from there. I hid away behind a tree to see what was happening.

All of a sudden, a strange boy came by and opened the door of the car. He grabbed hold of the briefcase and ran away with it. The editor saw the boy running away with his briefcase. He called out: "A Thief! A Thief! is running away with my money and my important documents. Please help me to catch him!"

The people all gathered around the editor when they heard him calling out for help. He was saying that he had just got off from his car for a few minutes and the thief stole his briefcase from his back seat.

They asked him: "How could you leave your car without locking it?"

He replied: "I lost my keys somewhere. That is why, I left the car open."

I suspect that the thief had known from beforehand that there were hundreds of thousands of Rupees in the briefcase. This was for the first time I had realized that amongst the envelopes, which I had taken out from the Editor's briefcase and put into my bag one of them had hundreds of thousands of Rupees in it. The thought of taking it and running away to some far away place had crept into my mind

quite often. Shaytan was whispering to me. However, my heart did not agree.

So, I went to the Editor with the envelopes and documents thinking that I must make him aware of it. But at the same time it must not happen such that he becomes so happy, he faints and falls down.

I asked him softly: “Editor! What! Has anything happened to you?”

The Editor looking at me replied: “Yes my child! My briefcase was stolen and there was an envelope in it with quite a few hundreds of thousands of Rupees. And, besides I also had some important documents in it.”

I asked him: “Editor! What was the colour of the envelope?”

“It was brownish in colour.”

The Editor instead, like a drowning person who caught hold of a straw, started asking me questions: “Son! Why do you ask? Do you perhaps have the envelope?”

I smiled telling him: “Yes, not only do I have your envelope, but I have in my bag some of your important documents too.”

As soon as he heard me saying this he grabbed hold of my bag and opened it up. He took out the envelope and the documents that were in it. I thought this was the ideal moment for me to run away, but the Editor followed me and tapped me on my shoulder: “Son! I will never be able to repay you my entire life for the good that you have done.”

He pulled me towards the hotel. It felt like butterflies were running in my stomach. I will never forget the Editor’s hospitality towards me. He told me to eat as much as I wanted to. I made the best of it, as I

knew that such occasions do not come by quite often. I ate to my fill, but my heart remained empty. Sadly, I had to leave out a lot of things.

As I was leaving, the Editor Saheb thanked me very much. He gave me One Thousand Rupees despite me refusing. He also saw me off at the bus station and paid for my ticket.

Mota placed the memorandum on the table and said: “As for this memorandum, I found it near the bus stop in the rubbish bin. The thief threw it away without even reading it.”

Then he smiled and said: “Let me give you some good news. The Editor Saheb has invited us all for a picnic and a weekend out to the country side.”

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THE ILLITERATE PERSON

One night, a jackal found a piece of paper on the roadside. He picked it up and took it with him. In the morning, he dangled the piece of paper in front of all the other jackals saying: “I now have a license to destroy all of the farmer’s water-melon plantations. We have an open freedom to enter anyone’s farm at any time. There is no fear whatsoever.”

So, daily the jackals started destroying the crops of the farmers one by one. One of the farmers got angry and could not take it anymore. So, he stayed up at night to guard his crops. When the jackals came into his fields, he at once chased them away.

The leader of the jackals took the piece of paper on which was written the general permission. He lifted it up so that the farmer could see it.

However, the farmer did not pay any attention to it, but he came charging after the jackals with his dogs. The leader of the jackals kept swaying the piece of paper in front of the farmer, but he did not stop coming.

So, the leader shouted out to the other jackals: “Run! Run! It seems as if the farmer is some illiterate person who does not know how to read.”

All the jackals ran away from there and never returned.

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THE END

Translation Editor
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